

VETERANS'

Summer 2005

Wellness

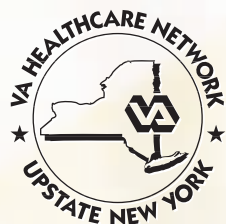
**Managing
the pressures
of caregiving**

**Overcoming
physical barriers
to exercise**

**What you should
know about
advance directives**

**Helping new
veterans readjust
to life at home**

**The 10 power
foods you need**



Sharing health care and benefits information with the veterans of upstate New York

Get fast answers to your health care benefit questions

Getting answers to VA health care benefit questions just got easier, thanks to a new centralized Veterans Service Contact Center.

The staff at the center, in Batavia, N.Y., is equipped to give you information about your health care benefits and answer your questions about enrollment, eligibility and billing statements. The service is available to all veterans toll free at **1 (888) 823-9656**.

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Improving your health care experience

Advanced Clinic Access gives you faster and better care



William F. Feeley,
Network Director

At VA, we're committed to providing you with the best medical care and service—with easier access and without delay. This means ensuring you have the flexibility to visit your VA health care provider whenever you need to, even if you must see your provider on the same day you contact us for an appointment.

We're making this possible with Advanced Clinic Access (ACA), a new program aimed at delivering quality care to veterans by eliminating unacceptable waits and delays for appointments at our clinics. ACA will do this by:

- Doing away with the practice of automatically scheduling future appointments. In the past, this created a scheduling backlog when many patients didn't need to return for a follow-up visit. Since we'll be scheduling follow-ups only as needed, we'll be able to keep more appointment slots open each day, enabling you to visit your provider when you need to.
- Scheduling longer time periods between your appointments when your provider deems it appropriate, sparing you the hassle of frequent, unnecessary visits.
- Following up with you by phone when possible, so you can avoid traveling to the clinic when it's not necessary.
- Seeing you via Telemedicine with videoconferencing so you don't have to travel to the clinic from a remote location.
- Encouraging veterans to take part in group visits with other patients who share similar ailments or wellness goals.
- Reminding all patients to call us when they can't keep a scheduled appointment, which will enable us to put another veteran in that time slot. Because appointments will no longer need to be booked so far in advance, patients will be less likely to forget their appointments.

You should begin to notice changes and improvement in access to VA health care soon. We hope you'll be pleased with Advanced Clinic Access—just one of the many ways we're trying to better your health care experiences with us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William F. Feeley".

William F. Feeley,
Network Director



Cover photograph © Jon Feingersh/
Masterfile

About our mailing list

We make every effort to maintain an accurate mailing list. If you have any questions about the mailing list or would like to be added or deleted, please write to Editor, *Veterans' Wellness*, Network 2 Communications, 465 Westfall Road, Rochester, NY 14620.

Please be sure to include your phone number with all correspondence.



Protect yourself against skin cancer

You don't have to be a sun worshipper to take sun protection seriously—even limited exposure can cause damage. Skin cancer is the most common kind of cancer in the United States, affecting nearly half of all Americans who live to age 65. Although most cancers don't appear until after age 50, skin cancer results from years of accumulated sun damage. However, you can avoid sun damage and enjoy your favorite outdoor activities by taking sensible precautions and using a sunscreen that protects your skin from damaging ultraviolet rays.



The ABCs of SPFs

Sunscreen products are rated according to their sun protection factor (SPF)—the length of time a product will protect you from sunburn caused by ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. But sunscreens don't provide complete protection. You still need to be cautious about timing (and limiting) your sun exposure.

Your best bet when shopping for

a sunscreen is to select a product with an SPF of 15 or more. Check the label to make sure it provides “broad-spectrum” protection—its ingredients will protect against UVB rays and ultraviolet A (UVA) rays. UVB rays cause sunburns that can lead to superficial skin cancers known as basal cell carcinomas and squamous cell carcinomas. UVB rays can also lead to the more deadly skin cancer melanoma. UVA rays penetrate even more deeply into the skin, damaging connective tissue.

Save-your-skin tips

If you will be outside, slather on sunscreen and find a shady spot, but keep in mind that sunlight reflects off surfaces such as water, sand and pavement. Avoid the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when its rays are strongest. Wear sunglasses, a broad-brimmed hat and clothing—preferably long-sleeved shirts and pants—made from tightly woven fabric to block sunlight. For your sunscreen to be most effective:

- Apply sunscreen about 30 minutes before going outdoors.

Your meds may not play well with the sun

Besides protecting yourself against skin cancer, there's another important reason to monitor your time in the sun. Many prescriptions and over-the-counter drugs, from pills to special skin creams, don't mix well with a dose of UV light. Some examples include nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as Advil, Aleve and Naproxen; acne treatments such as tetracycline, Retin-A and Accutane; antibiotics like Cipro that treat bacterial infections; and some antidepressants.

The chemicals in these medications can produce a photoreaction, increasing your skin's sensitivity to sunshine and causing eczema-like rashes, eye burn, swelling, blistering, reddening and scaling, even after limited exposure to rays.

Skin that tends not to burn easily can get lobster-red in under an hour; if you're fair-skinned, you're likely to be even more vulnerable. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if a medication you're using—whether prescription or over-the-counter—can make you more sun-sensitive.

The ABCs of skin cancer

Be sure to examine the moles on your skin each month for unusual changes and see your doctor if you spot any of these irregularities:

- A)** asymmetry, or an irregular shape
- B)** borders that are irregular
- C)** color within the mole that's variable or very dark, or a mole whose colors include white, gray, red or blue
- D)** diameter greater than one-quarter inch
- E)** evolving in appearance, such as changes in size, shape or color or the mole itches, oozes or bleeds.

In addition, any new “ugly” mole should be evaluated, as should any hard, lumpy or scaly mole.

- Apply sunscreen liberally. Use 1 ounce of sunscreen to cover all exposed areas of your body, including your neck, ears and scalp.
- Reapply sunscreen every 90 minutes—more often if you sweat heavily or go swimming.
- Use sunscreen on cloudy days—UV rays can still reach you.

Make applying sunscreen a habit—like brushing your teeth. ■

Caring for the caregiver

Teresa Post knows a lot about the demands of being a caregiver. The 58-year-old Elmira resident quit her waitress job five years ago to provide full-time care to her husband, Donald, who had been diagnosed with Pick's disease, a form of dementia, 12 years ago when he was 47 years old. This past spring, Donald, a Vietnam veteran who served in the Air Force, passed away. Despite Teresa's challenging role, she remained healthy and active throughout her husband's illness.

It wasn't easy. Donald experienced seizures. He behaved erratically, pacing from one end of the room to the other all day long or turning lights, fans and faucets on and off for hours. He wandered. He was incontinent. He drank a bottle of nail polish. Five years ago, he simply stopped talking.

"I would pray, I would cry. And I would crawl into bed with Donald and cuddle with him," Teresa says. "I didn't want to put him into a home, so I had to learn to accept help when I needed it."

Teresa turned to family, friends, neighbors and VA, which provided her with Donald's medications, wheelchairs, a hospital bed, walkers, a commode, a bathtub chair and an electric device to help lift him when he fell. When Donald was bedridden with double pneumonia and a blood clot on his lung, VA sent home health aides to feed and bathe him so Teresa could run to the store.

Dialing for support

"Caregivers get so busy taking care of the person they love that they forget about taking care of themselves," says Laura Wray, Ph.D., Director of Education for the VA Center for Integrated Healthcare in Buffalo. "Many give up social contacts, stop going to church or getting regular medical checkups." The long-term stress caregivers endure puts them at risk for mental and physical health problems such as depression, anxiety, arthritis, back injury and gastrointestinal problems like ulcers, she says.

When Dr. Wray found many caregivers of veterans with dementia were unable to attend support group meetings because they couldn't leave their loved ones home alone, she and two colleagues decided to give them the help and information they needed over the telephone—and to study the results.

The first phone support group began late last year. By 2007, when the study is scheduled to end, 160 couples (each consisting of one patient and one caregiver) within VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York will have participated. Half the couples will not have received phone counseling. The other half will have taken part in a weekly one-hour phone conference with a facilitator.

Over a 10-week period, each caregiver will learn how to:

- understand their loved one's dementia and recognize when more





Teresa Post (left), shown here with her daughter and grandson, found the strength to care for her ailing husband from the support of her loved ones.

help or structure is needed

- cope with their loved one's deteriorating language skills by talking more simply and using shorter sentences
- prompt conversation by creating a "memory album," a simple home-made book with one picture on each page that relates to something important in their loved one's life
- relieve stress with relaxation and deep breathing exercises
- tap into resources, like respite care at VA Center
- start nursing-home placement and write advance directives (for end-of-life medical care)

The study, "A Telehealth Education Program for Caregivers of Veterans with Dementia," is open to veterans with moderate to severe dementia and their caregivers and is funded by VA Health Services Research & Development. Dr. Wray hopes the service becomes routine so more veterans—many of whom live in rural areas—will be able to access the help they need.

Receiving help

Teresa was lucky. A lot of good people pitched in to help. She also attended monthly support group meetings and seminars where she learned care tips, like how to wash her husband's hair in bed. When depression began to overwhelm her, she sought treatment.

Teresa Post's tips for caregivers

The support Teresa got throughout her husband's illness helped her cope. She offers these tips to other caregivers:

- **Find out about services in your area.** "I got an electronic ankle bracelet from the Office of Aging. An alarm sounded when Donald tried to stray more than 40 feet away from the house."
- **Keep up with your physicals and screenings.** "If you don't feel well, see your doctor. If you don't take care of yourself, you can't help your loved one as well," Teresa says.
- **Regulate your money and pay your bills.** Accept all the help VA offers.
- **Get to know how your loved one responds to different things.** "Donald would wander, but I found that if I closed the blinds, he wouldn't leave the house," she says.
- **Cry—"It's healing."**
- **Eat regular meals.** "When Donald ate, I ate with him."
- **Ask for help from the people around you—you can't do it all by yourself.**
- **Try to attend church services regularly.**

Teresa believes caregivers need to keep their lives as normal as possible. She continued to bowl and occasionally went out to dinner during her husband's illness. "When you give up things you enjoy, that's when you become depressed. Ask for help," she says. "Accept that things will change—your husband's health will deteriorate. Just know that whatever decision you make about his care, if it's made out of love, it's the right decision, no matter what anyone else tells you." ■

For more information about how VA can help caregivers, call your local VA medical center primary care team. To learn more about the study, call **1-(800)-532-8387, ext. 7934.**



A gift to loved ones

Life is a one-way journey, and planning for how and when the trip will end is not easy to do. But it's important that you make decisions about your future medical care while your health still allows you to do so—and to put those wishes in writing. To help those closest to you and ensure your wishes are followed, prepare your advance directives while you're in good health.

What are advance directives?

Advance directives are written instructions about your medical care in the form of a living will or durable power of attorney for health care. These instructions don't go into effect until you are no longer able to make decisions as a result of an injury or illness.

In a living will, you state your wishes about life-sustaining treatment and spell out exact measures you would choose or refuse. These can include the use of breathing machines, feeding tubes, oxygen and intravenous fluids. You may also list specific conditions such as coma, incurable illness and end-stage dementia, under which the terms of your living will go into effect. A

Advance directives make your health care wishes known

durable power of attorney for health care appoints a family member or friend to follow your wishes about end-of-life care if you can't make treatment decisions for yourself.

Getting started

You can obtain a VA advance directive, which combines a living will and a durable power of attorney and is accepted by all VA sites and facilities, from VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York Web site at www1.va.gov/visns/visn02/vet/advance.html. A New York state health care proxy form and a New York state living will are also available on the same site if you'd prefer to fill out the state version, which includes organ donation instructions. (If you don't have Internet access, ask your VA health care provider to give you copies of the form.)

Before filling out the form, you may wish to talk with your provider about medical issues and treatment choices to consider. Once you've made your decisions and

have completed the form, you'll need to have two witnesses sign it. Bring a copy of the completed form to your provider, who will place it in your medical file. Keep the original for yourself and give copies to your family, the person you appoint to make your health care decisions and to anyone else involved in your care. You can change your advance directives any time you wish.

You can get additional help by visiting www.puttinwriting.org. This Web resource, recently launched by the American Hospital Association, offers easy-to-use information about advance directives, such as a glossary of terms, a wallet card letting health care workers know you have an advance directive and tips for communicating your wishes to your loved ones.

Having advance directives doesn't mean efforts to save your life will change. Doctors will do all they can to save you and you'll receive life-sustaining treatment until it becomes clear there's no hope of recovery. ■



Readjusting to life back home

When new habits pose challenges for veterans and their loved ones

When Chris, a 31-year-old E-4 specialist, returned from Baghdad in April 2004, he brought home with him the dangerous habit of driving in the middle of the road—a habit that, to this day, he's still unable to break. "There were a couple of times they blew up my Humvee with roadside bombs," says Chris, now deaf in one ear from those explosions, explaining why he stays away from the curb.

His wife, Melissa, talks about what it's like to be in the passenger seat when Chris is driving. "He's constantly looking to the side of the road, and he's always cautious when we come to overpasses," she says.

Obedying stop signs and traffic signals poses more problems. "If at any point in time [in Iraq] you were signaled to stop, there was usually something waiting for you," Chris says.

Readjusting to civilian life after being in the military—particularly in active combat—isn't easy. It's common, and altogether normal, for returnees to have developed new habits that worry their loved ones. Veterans themselves may recognize they've changed but not know what to do about it.

No safe haven at home

Even in their own homes, many veterans can't relax. They've become jumpy, unable to calm themselves. Loving dads hit their boiling points quickly. Communication between spouses suffers.

Catherine is the wife of 24-year-old John, who returned from Iraq

last year. John, she says, is no longer the same man she married. When their baby cries, John becomes irritated. If the Internet takes too long to load, he begins to swear. John was prescribed an antidepressant but stopped taking it because he felt he didn't need it.

John, like Chris, was wounded in combat. In a coma for three weeks, John lost a kidney and part of his colon. He's had at least 10 surgeries. Now that he's home, he prefers to sit at his PlayStation or go out with his friends, says Catherine. At night, he often wakes up screaming.

"He talks down to me," says Catherine, who is trying hard to understand the man her husband has become. "He's not loving any more."

Chris, on the other hand, cleans the house constantly or heads to the basement to refinish furniture. "When I get bored, I get frustrated. Over there, we were on the go 24/7. Since you were never really safe, you always had to be on your toes."

But Chris still doesn't feel safe. "I was used to having an M16 and a pistol around my hip. Then you come home and you have nothing." Window shades remain open so Chris can check outside the house at all times.

Fighting fear

Many vets know the terror of thunderstorms, construction blasts and fireworks, which can bring back painful memories. Not long ago, someone tossed fireworks out of a car in front of Chris' house. Chris hit



Do you need to talk?

If you or someone you care about needs help readjusting to civilian life, contact one of the Points of Contact below:

ALBANY Lorn Gingrich, MSW
(518) 626-5322

BATH Bruce Tucker, CSW-R
(607) 664-4513

CANANDAIGUA Pamela Wright, CSW
(585) 393-8154

SYRACUSE Linda Hobbick, RN
(315) 425-2420

WESTERN NEW YORK
Katherine Smythe, CSW-R
(716) 862-3111

the floor. "I think I did everything but dig a foxhole," he says.

Getting help

It takes time to overcome these new behaviors. Having patience and supportive loved ones helps. But often it takes more. Veterans can find comfort when they talk with others who share their experiences, says Katherine Smythe, social worker at VA Medical Center in Buffalo. They learn that their behaviors—checking overpasses for snipers, reaching for weapons—are normal and that techniques exist that can help veterans readjust to being back home. ■

Exercise: Good for all ages and conditions

Don't let age, illness or a physical disability stop you from getting the activity you need

No matter what your age or health condition, getting some form of exercise is good for you. What's more, *avoiding* activity can be bad for your health.

That means that the elderly and people with a disability or a chronic illness should aim to benefit from exercise, too. Get your VA health care provider's OK before you start exercising. He or she will help you develop a program that's designed for your individual needs, especially if you have a disability or medical condition.

A little is a lot

For the greatest rewards, aim for some physical activity every day or at least four or five times a week. Experts recommend you exercise 30 to 60 minutes a day, but if that's too much, you can break up activity into shorter periods, say three to six daily 10-minute increments. Include cardiovascular endurance, strength training and stretching as part of your routine. A general guideline to follow is the

3-2-1 principle:
For every hour
of time spent on
exercise, spend
30 minutes on
cardiovascular
activity, 20
minutes on
strength

training and 10 minutes stretching.

You don't have to join a gym or buy equipment to get started. You can stick to low-impact activities easy on the joints, such as:

- **Walking.** Start with short strolls and gradually increase your distance. If weather interferes with your routine, try your local mall. Many malls let walkers come early before stores open.

- **Swimming or water exercising.** Working out in water is a gentle way to exercise joints and muscles. It's ideal for people with arthritis or osteoporosis or anyone with mobility problems. If you don't have access to a pool, check your local YMCA or YWCA or fitness club; many health facilities offer water aerobics classes.

- **Bicycling.** Cycling is a good calorie burner that provides an aerobic workout and builds leg muscles without stressing joints.

- **Tai chi.** The slow movements of this mind-body exercise (*see opposite page*) can help you improve your balance and flexibility.

- **Gardening.** Raking, hoeing, pruning and digging are great exercises to strengthen your arms, legs and back.

- **Group exercise classes and/or exercise videos.** Many senior centers and health clubs offer classes specially tailored for older adults, such as chair aerobics or gentle chair yoga. If you'd prefer to stay home, check out the many exercise videos and DVDs available on the Internet.

(Collage Video at www.collagevideo.com has a variety of

chair dancing and seated exercise videos.) Even Jack La Lanne offers a "Back to Basics" chair exercise video, available at www.jacklallanne.com.

Overcoming barriers

If you are disabled, frail, use a wheelchair or have other health challenges, you don't have to forego exercise. Here are a few exercise ideas:

- **Use elastic resistance bands or tubing to strength train.** Lightweight, inexpensive and easy to use, this equipment can be used while you're seated to strengthen your muscles.

People who use wheelchairs are prone to overusing certain muscles, so it's especially important to train those muscles that are underworked.

- **Use "cuff" weights that wrap around your wrists or ankles** if you have difficulty grasping or holding on to dumbbells.

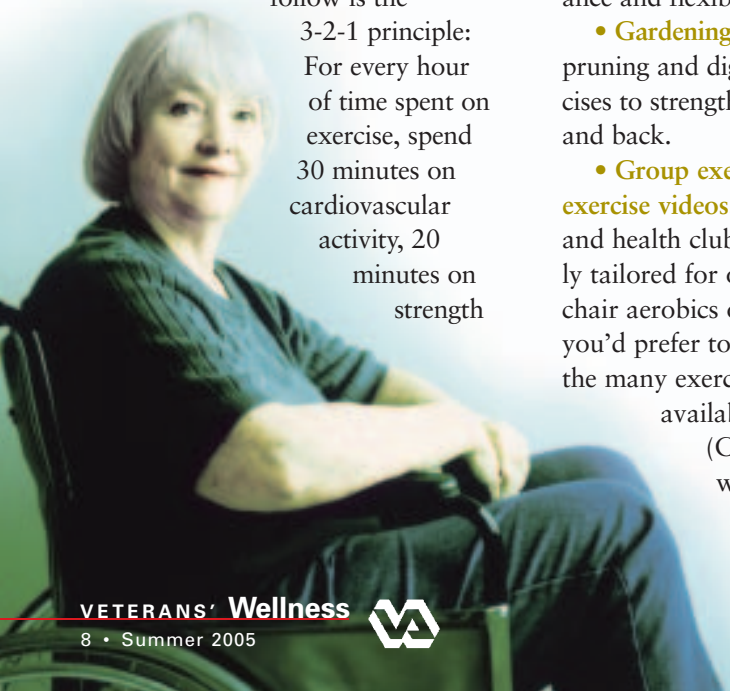
- **Wheel yourself in your wheelchair.** Aim to raise your heart rate by wheeling yourself in an open area for 10 to 30 minutes at a time.

- **Throw some hoops.** You can play wheelchair basketball at home or, for more intense activity, consider joining a team. Contact the National Wheelchair Basketball Association at (719) 266-4082 or www.nwba.org for a league near you.

- **Try a hand, or arm-driven, cycle.** These specially made bicycles are modified so you can pedal with your hands and arms.

- **Stretch.** Flexibility exercise is an important component of your fitness program because it helps maintain range of motion. If you have a spinal cord injury, it's particularly essential to prevent muscles from becoming permanently shortened.

In most cases, everyone can do something—but only your provider can say what's right for you. ■



Demystifying the mind-body exercises

Which one is right for you?

Are you confused about the fitness classes being offered these days with exotic-sounding names like tai chi and Pilates? These so-called mind-body exercises combine physical movements with breathing and concentration techniques to keep your body strong and flexible, improve balance and relieve stress. Here's a rundown of the three most popular:

Yoga

Yoga, the 5,000-year-old Hindu-based tradition, is a form of low-impact exercise that reduces stress, increases stamina and helps tone and strengthen muscles.

Yoga focuses on posture, breathing, meditation and relaxation. You don't need to be in great shape to start—just know your limits. If you have a bad back, don't attempt to bend into a pretzel shape on your first try.

Yoga is good for people with arthritis because it fights stiffness by

keeping joints strong and muscles limber. Studies have shown that yoga helps lower blood pressure and eases breathing for people with asthma.

Certain types of yoga may not be appropriate for pregnant women or people with extremely high or low blood pressure, a risk of blood clots, sciatica or glaucoma.

Tai chi

The precise yet easy-to-learn movements of this ancient Chinese practice, paired with calm breathing and concentration, exercise the body and soothe the mind.

Tai chi (pronounced "tie chee") features slow, synchronized postures.

Despite its quiet style, tai chi works the muscles and tunes up your balance and posture. Studies have shown that tai chi can reduce falls, lower blood pressure and release tension. It also improves alertness and flexibility. It can benefit people with arthritis or muscle pain because it increases muscle strength and relieves aches.

Pilates

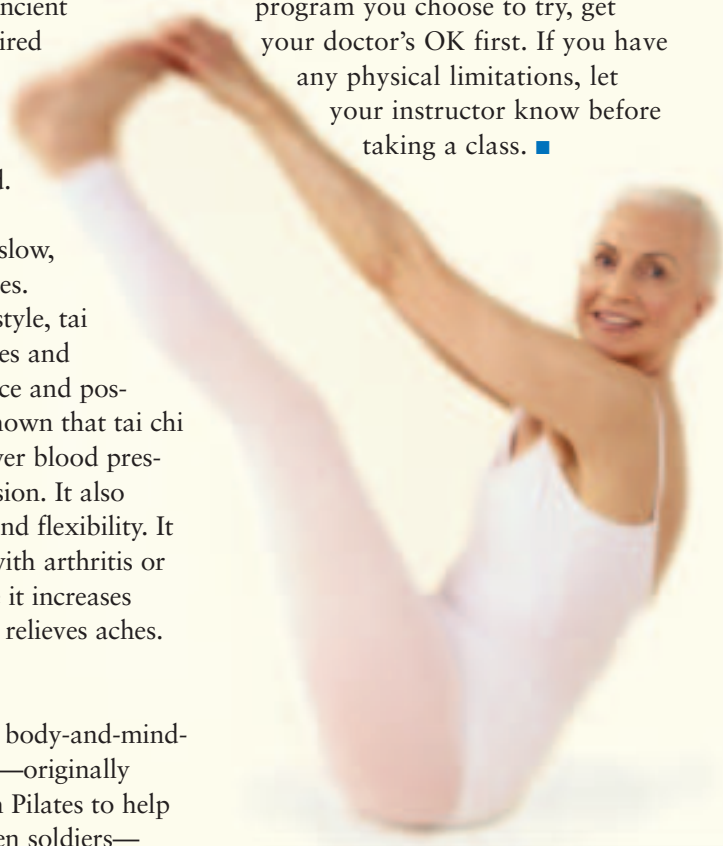
This century-old, body-and-mind-conditioning system—originally developed by Joseph Pilates to help rehabilitate bedridden soldiers—focuses on abdominal strength, pelvic stability and alignment.

Pilates (pronounced "puh-lah-tees") is based on set patterns of movement in limited repetitions, using your own body weight as resistance. Some forms require special equipment (such as stretching

straps, exercise balls and a bedlike structure with a sliding platform), but Pilates can be performed on an exercise mat.

Pilates is adaptable to any fitness level and can help flatten your belly as well as relieve chronic lower back and neck pain. It's designed to develop strength and flexibility—an advantage if you're battling arthritis—and will strengthen your back.

Whichever style of mind-body program you choose to try, get your doctor's OK first. If you have any physical limitations, let your instructor know before taking a class. ■



Breathe better, feel better

Are you breathing for optimum health? Slow and controlled inhaling and exhaling can help you relax under tension or stress.

Stand up and breathe deeply. As you inhale, does your belly go in or does it go out? It should go out, but many people expand only their chests, not their diaphragms. That means they're not breathing as deeply as they can.

Breathe deeply, and you'll feel more relaxed and mentally alert, say researchers. Deep breathing can be practiced nearly anywhere—in your car, on line at the grocery store or when your auto mechanic hands you a repair bill for \$500.

Redeem this coupon for 10% off men's or ladies' outerwear at the Veterans Canteen Service retail store in Network 2. Compliments of the Veterans Canteen Service. Offer limited to veteran patients.

Expires 9-01-05

10

power foods

The fuel your body needs
to keep going ... and
going ... and going

Do you sometimes feel as if you need super powers just to get you through a busy day? Good nutrition is one way to help you stay energized and healthy. The right food choices help prevent chronic disease, keep cholesterol low and provide energy. Try to include in your diet these 10 foods that pack a power punch:

1 Berries. A half-cup of blueberries a day may help improve balance, coordination and short-term memory. And ruby-red strawberries deliver vitamin C and fiber for a bargain level of calories (3 grams fiber and 43 calories per cup).

2 Apples. Recent studies indicate that the apple's peel provides most of the fruit's anticancer and antioxidant benefits.

3 Fish. Omega-3 fatty acids in fish help prevent blood clots and heart attacks and improve the ratio of good cholesterol to bad cholesterol. Key omega-3s, a combination of nutrients that are essential for good health, are found in salmon and tuna.

4 Flaxseed. In one study, postmenopausal women who ate ground flaxseed every day had reduced levels of hormones associated with breast cancer. Ground flax also contains fiber and omega-3 fatty acids. Flaxseed, found in health food stores and supermarkets, is sold as whole seeds, ground seeds and oil. To flex your flax muscle, look for frozen waffles that contain flax or ground seeds you can bake into muffins or quick breads or sprinkle over cereal.

5 Grape juice. Its disease-fighting antioxidants, called flavonoids, have been shown to prevent clogged arteries and blood clots.

6 Greens. Dark green veggies like collard greens, spinach and broccoli deliver fiber and may help protect bones.

7 Milk. Its cool dose of calcium helps prevent bone fractures and osteoporosis. Other good calcium sources: yogurt, reduced-fat cheeses and sardines or canned salmon.

8 Nuts. As long as you don't overdo it, these crunchy, protein-packed powerhouses can be a smart addition to your diet. A recent study found that people who ate nuts regularly had 50 percent fewer heart attacks than people who didn't. For 150 to 190 calories, bank on 12 pecan halves, 14 walnut halves or 27 almonds.

9 Soy. This won't relieve everybody's hot flashes, but studies show that up to 20 percent of women find it helpful. And substituting soy protein for meat—via veggie burgers or meatless breakfast links, for example—will significantly reduce the saturated fat you consume, a good step for heart health. Research also suggests that soy foods may keep arteries flexible and bones stronger.

10 Whole grains. High intakes of fiber-rich whole grains, such as oatmeal and whole-grain breads, reduce blood lipids and decrease the risk of heart disease and colon cancer. ■



Grilled tuna and vegetables with balsamic dressing

Grilling is a heart-healthy way to savor the season. This recipe provides a good dose of fish and fiber. And the pita triangles are great for soaking up the zippy balsamic dressing.

Balsamic dressing

- ½ cup fat-free, low-sodium chicken broth
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar
- 2 teaspoons brown sugar
- 2 medium garlic cloves, minced
- ½ teaspoon dried basil, crumbled
- 4 tuna steaks (about 4 ounces each)
- 1 small eggplant (about 1 pound), unpeeled, cut lengthwise into ½-inch slices
- 2 medium zucchini, cut lengthwise into ¼-inch slices
- olive oil spray
- 1 teaspoon dried basil, crumbled
- ½ cup halved cherry tomatoes
- 4 6-inch whole-wheat pita breads, quartered

In a small bowl, whisk together the dressing ingredients. Cover and refrigerate.

Preheat the grill on medium-high.

Rinse the tuna and pat dry with paper towels. Lightly spray the top of the tuna, eggplant and zucchini with olive oil spray. Sprinkle with 1 teaspoon basil. Turn the ingredients over and lightly spray with olive oil spray.

Grill the tuna for 3 to 5 minutes on each side, or to desired doneness. Grill the eggplant slices for 2 to 3 minutes on each side, or until tender. Grill the zucchini slices for 1 to 2 minutes on each side, or until tender.

Put all the ingredients except the pita triangles in a large bowl. Toss to coat evenly. Arrange the pita triangles around the salad.

Serves 4. Per serving: 385 calories, 6.5 g total fat (1 g saturated, 1.5 g polyunsaturated, 3.0 g monounsaturated), 51 mg cholesterol, 471 mg sodium, 49 g carbohydrates, 9 g fiber, 11 g sugar, 35 g protein

Source: American Heart Association One-Dish Meals ©2003 American Cancer Society, Inc., www.cancer.org/bookstore. All rights reserved.



free VA Wellness Programs

VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York is dedicated to improving the health of our veterans. To help you stay healthy and informed, we are pleased to offer the following wellness programs designed especially for veterans. All programs are free. For more information including dates, times and locations, please call one of the numbers listed below between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Stress Management

Individual counseling is available to help you manage your stress. *For more information, call:*

Albany (518) 626-5351
Bath (607) 664-4331
Buffalo (716) 862-8595
Canandaigua (585) 393-7252
Syracuse (315) 425-3485

Diabetes Management

This 12-month program helps veterans with diabetes develop self-management tools. The program provides tips on nutrition and exercise and how to reduce your risk of diabetes complications. *For more information, call:*

Albany, contact your primary care provider
Bath (607) 664-4614 or (607) 664-4626
Batavia (716) 343-7500, ext. 7386
Buffalo (716) 862-8844
Canandaigua (585) 393-7109 or (585) 393-7126
Syracuse (315) 425-2432

Understanding Your Medications

Individual counseling is offered for veterans who need help managing medications. *For more information, call:*

Albany (518) 626-5780
Bath (607) 664-4413, then press 2
Buffalo (716) 862-8881 or (716) 862-3223
Canandaigua (585) 393-7122, then press 2
ROPC (585) 463-2697, then press 2
Syracuse (315) 425-4400, ext. 52026, then press 2

Depression and the Elderly

Individual and group counseling is available to help veterans deal with late-life depression. *For more information, call:*

Albany (518) 626-5339
Bath (607) 664-4301
Buffalo (716) 862-8595
Canandaigua (585) 393-7250
Syracuse (315) 425-3485

Dementia Care Services

Held quarterly in Albany and monthly in Buffalo, the workshop covers a variety of dementia-related topics of interest to patients and caregivers. *For more information, call:*

Albany (518) 626-6051
Buffalo (716) 862-3237
Canandaigua (585) 393-7901

New Patient Orientation

Rochester Outpatient Clinic

Learn how VA system works and how to access services. Includes information on pharmacy services, eligibility and mental health services. Can also be attended by existing patients for a refresher. *Held every other Friday afternoon. For dates and times, call Geri Wiess at (585) 463-274*

2nd Annual Behavioral Health Patient Education Series

Rochester Outpatient Clinic September 9–16

Protect Your Brain

Strategies to improve/maintain memory function
Friday, September 9, noon–1 p.m.
Amy Warner, N.P.

Eat Healthy Out and About

Monday, September 12, noon–1 p.m.
Carol Stratton, R.D.

Tai Chi Chuan for Beginners

Tuesday, September 13,
noon–1 p.m.
Kathleen Gill, M.D.

Overview of Stress Management Techniques

Wednesday, September 14,
noon–1 p.m.
Ray Jablonski, L.C.S.W.

Caregiver Support

Thursday, September 15,
noon–1 p.m.
Tammy Franklin, L.C.S.W.

Healthy Choices: Lifestyle Changes for Weight Management

Friday, September 16, noon–1 p.m.
Colleen Matter, M.D.

For more information, contact ROPC Behavioral Health at (585) 463-2668.



The sound of safety: Talking pill bottles

Visually impaired veterans have a new tool for taking medications safely. ScripTalk is a pocket-sized device given to veterans that scans VA prescription bottles and reads aloud their label information, including name, dosage instructions, warnings and refills remaining. ScripTalk was designed to reduce medical errors.

Unveiled at the Syracuse VA in May, ScripTalk reads microchips implanted in labels printed in the VA's pharmacy computer system. The new technology is offered exclusively to veterans and won't work with bottles from other retail pharmacies.



Reaching us is easy

www.va.gov/visns/visn02

VA medical centers

Albany

113 Holland Avenue
Albany, NY 12208
(518) 626-5000

Batavia

222 Richmond Avenue
Batavia, NY 14020
(585) 343-7500

Bath

76 Veterans Avenue
Bath, NY 14810
(607) 664-4000

Buffalo

3495 Bailey Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14215
(716) 834-9200

Canandaigua

400 Fort Hill Avenue
Canandaigua, NY 14424
(585) 394-2000

Syracuse

800 Irving Avenue
Syracuse, NY 13210
(315) 425-4400

Community-based outpatient clinics

Auburn

Auburn Memorial Hospital
17 Lansing Street
Auburn, NY 13021
(315) 255-7002

Bainbridge

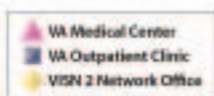
109 North Main Street
Bainbridge, NY 13733
(607) 967-8590

Binghamton

425 Robinson Street
Binghamton, NY 13001
(607) 772-9100

Carthage

3 Bridge Street
Carthage, NY 13619
(315) 493-4180



Catskill

Greene Medical Bldg.
159 Jefferson Heights
Catskill, NY 12414
(518) 943-7515

Clifton Park

1673 Route 9
Clifton Park, NY 12065
(518) 383-8506

Cortland

1129 Commons Avenue
Cortland, NY 13045
(607) 662-1517

Dunkirk

The Resource Center
325 Central Avenue
Dunkirk, NY 14048
(716) 366-2122

Elizabethtown

P.O. Box 277,
Park Street
Elizabethtown, NY 12932
(518) 873-3295

Elmira

Health Services Bldg.
200 Madison Avenue
Suite 2E
Elmira, NY 14901
(877) 845-3247

Fonda

Camp Mohawk Plaza
Rt. 30A
Fonda, NY 12068
(518) 853-1247

Glens Falls

84 Broad Street
Glens Falls, NY 12801
(518) 798-6066

Ithaca

VA Outpatient Clinic
10 Arrowwood Drive
Ithaca, NY 14850
(607) 274-4680

Jamestown

The Resource Center
890 East Second Street
Jamestown, NY 14701
(716) 661-1447

Kingston

63 Hurley Avenue
Kingston, NY 12401
(845) 331-8322

Lackawanna

Our Lady of Victory
Family Care Center
227 Ridge Road
Lackawanna, NY 14218
(716) 822-5944

Lockport

Ambulatory Care Center
5875 S. Transit Road
Lockport, NY 14094
(716) 433-2025

Malone

183 Park Street
Suite 3
Malone, NY 12953
(518) 481-2545

Massena

1 Hospital Drive
Massena, NY 13662
(315) 769-4253

Niagara Falls

VA Outpatient Clinic
2201 Pine Avenue
Niagara Falls, NY 14301-2300
(800) 223-4810

Olean

465 North Union Street
Olean, NY 14760-2658
(716) 373-7709

Oswego

Seneca Hills Health
Services Center
County Route 45A
Oswego, NY 13126
(315) 343-0925

Plattsburgh

43 Durkee St.
Plattsburgh, NY 12901
(518) 561-8310

Rochester

465 Westfall Road
Rochester, NY 14620
(585) 463-2600

Rome

125 Brookley Road,
Bldg. 510
Rome, NY 13441
(315) 334-7100

Schenectady

1322 Gerling St.
Sheridan Plaza
Schenectady, NY 12308
(518) 346-3334

Troy

Troy Primary Care Practice
295 River Street
Troy, NY 12180
(518) 274-7707

Warsaw

Wyoming County
Community Hospital
400 N. Main Street
Warsaw, NY 14569
(585) 344-3355

Wellsville

Jones Memorial Hospital
Health Care Center
13 Loder Street
Wellsville, NY 14895
(585) 596-2056

VETERANS'
Wellness

Network 2 Communications
465 Westfall Road
Rochester, NY 14620

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